

"Decoration Day"

Address

Soldiers of the grand Army, Friends, and
Fellow Citizens.— The great battle was
fought and won.— For long years the issue
of the bloody contest seemed doubtful —
but it finally ended for us in a glorious
victory.— A victory which in my judgement
brought final and lasting peace.— for
I cannot bring myself to believe — that
American Soil — shall ever again be shaken
by the tread of great hostile Armies.—
When tempests madden the waters of
of old ocean — the angry waves dash
themselves ^{upon} ~~against~~ the barrier God has
set against them — and climb for up
the beach in their vain endeavor to
escape.— The storm subsides at length dies
away — the waters subside to their old level

-and sparkle ~~as~~^{so} joyously in the sunshine
~~that~~ you might forget their short lived
rage & terror. - You might forget; - but high
up there on the white sands - lies a long
black ridge of drift. - There are trunks
& spars torn from the deck of some great
vessel. - fragments of costly cargoes. - tangled
branches of seaweed - with here & there perchance
the ghastly face of a corpse. - all driven
ashore by the waves. - scattered about in the
wildest confusion. - and left there to mark
the light to which the furious waters rose. -

So the strong winds of desire -
sometimes agitate the sea of human
~~desires~~^{passions} - until it rises in ungovernable
fury. - The great red billows of war
roll over the country - bearing ruin
and desolation on their crest. - But
this storm too dies away. - The great
armies disband and sink back to the

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level of peaceful occupations:- the
sulphurous clouds are driven away
by the pure breeze of morning:- the
mimic thunder & lightning made by the
play of artillery ceases:- the trampled
fields grow green again:- the song birds
return to the Vallies,- and in the calm
of peace which succeeds - one might
forget that war had been, -- One
might forget - but like the ocean storm
it leaves ~~its~~ a monument of its sad
work, -- Thickly fringing the edges of
every battle field over which the great
contest surged, - scattered at intervals all
over the face of the country are the
soldier graves which that contest made.

Clustered thickly in the fair vallies
of the south, - dotting the hillsides of
old New England, - rising above the
extended plains of the far West, - are the

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mounds which mark the last resting
places of those brave men who fell victims
in the strife. - While time suffers these
mounds to stand - and permits the inscription
upon the head ~~board~~^{stone} to remain legible -
we shall never forget those long and
bitter years of trial. -

Since these graves which we come
here to day to decorate - were made
the grass has grown green above them -

Since they who sleep underneath - came
back to us - pierced with the enemies bullets -
or wasted with disease - Crisp home to die, -

The seasons have come & gone - until already
their names begin to be less familiar, -

The busy world has pursued its busy
life - and their places at the desk - in the
workshop - or on the farm - have been taken
by others, - The bitter tears for their loss -
have somewhat ceased to flow, - The void

which they left in the hearts of their friends,
has been partially filled by other relations,-
As Individuals - as Men - they may soon
be forgotten - even as other dead pass out
the thought of the living. - But spite of Times
changing influences - one thought - shall
keep their memory ever green. - One name
which they have won. - "Soldier of the
Republic" will keep them in remembrance -
while the Union for which they sacrificed
their lives, endures. - Years hence - when their
hands which to day scatter flowers above their
graves, - shall in their turn have all ~~folded~~ ^{folded} have been
folded in the sleep that knows no waking, -
the hands of our Children - of our children's
children - shall perform the same sweet office. -

As they wander through our cemeteries -
and pause to ^{glance over} ~~read~~ some time worn inscription -
through the name may appear strange - and
fail to recall the person who once bore it

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"they shall read - "a defender of the Republic
in the hour of her sorest need" - and ~~step~~
pass reverently on as every earth hallowed
by more than common dust -

The memory which that ~~epitaph~~ shall
awaken in their minds - is the memory
to which we now pay tribute, - ~~that~~ these
soldiers dead ~~may~~ in name & person - may
have been strangers to many of us. - Some here
assembled save the friends of their own household
or their comrades in the open field, - may
treasure their memory as men, - But as
soldiers - we each owe them a debt of gratitude,
and we ~~must~~ ^{feel a} common respect & reverence
for the courage & patriotism, - which inspired
their action, - - -

I say we owe them a debt of gratitude - which
though this decoration may symbolize - it can
never repay, - Can we restore ~~the~~ to their
dead bodies the young souls - which escaped through

the cruel wounds - received in defense of the
common cause? - Can we restore the bright
hopes which the breath of battle withered? -

Can we resume the silken bonds of
love which the fatal bullet tore asunder?

All this was sacrificed for us. - - They
~~forsook~~ gave up
~~yielded up~~ the comforts and endearments of
home. - they yielded the Ambitions which
gilded their future with golden promises -
they even parted with life itself - to purchase
our safety. - - They endured such toils and
hardships as find no comparison in time
of peace. - They stood for years looking
directly into the grim jaws of death. - facing
a ~~fire~~ perils which they knew at any moment
might overwhelm them, - and all to
slay the hand of the invader - which was
already lifted to strike us. -

We who remained ^{at} home - watching
anxiously for reports from the battle field

~~may be~~ at the time they have only felt solicitude for the safety of our friends. -

But if we realized the true situation - we knew, that between us and the traitorous hearts which thirsted for our blood - stood a wall of living men, - and upon their courage & firmness - depended at once our personal safety and the fulfillment of all our hopes, - - They stood immovable - a rock against which the southern army dashed - only to be smitten broken & vanquished. -

They received & hurled back the great wave which would otherwise have rolled over us, - Those men who felt their ~~own sleep~~ & their ~~own~~ - ruined within their own bosoms the - the deadly messengers of death which might otherwise have found their way to our hearts, - - Do not we all - old & young rich & poor - owe them such a debt as neither words - nor gold nor

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flowers can repay!

We must perforce respect their memory - for had they not been noble men, - they would never have slept in a soldier's grave, - when in response to call after call issued by the government, - great armies sprang up in a night, as it were, - when troops crowded to the front so thick & fast that they ~~were~~ ^{were} obliged to wait for their arms & equipments, - and that too when the low pay of a common soldier was too meagre - to offer any hope of gain, - there must have been a genuine patriotism - in the alacrity with which they sprang to arms -

They must needs have been instinctively courageous - for unaccustomed to habits of peaceful industry - they had none of that love of excitement which is born of a life of peril, - to urge them

into battle - and there must have been
that true courage - which does everything
in defense of right. - They may, some
of them, have been rough and uncouth; -
they may have been unlearned, - and without
more than a faint glimmer of the great
truths of religion; - men of whom polite
society took little notice - upon whom
it bestowed no titles; - but they honored
the institutions of their country; they
loved Justice & freedom, truth & right, -
as they hated oppression, - and they
gave their lives to redeem their fellows from
the rule of tyranny, - - was it not the
crowning virtue in the character of Jesus
himself that "he gave his life a ransom
for many". - And however we may
have rated them, - think you not that
God saw in these self sacrificing soldiers -
the traits of sterling and noble manhood, -

And so we come down a day with some
multitude of spring flowers - to amongst them
pinks, - and nothing the day to come we see
in the morning - but a few faint ones -
most of them on the large dark leaves of the
small plants which are - who were
to ~~the~~ ^{be} in the house - who were
all in a state of what they believe to be death.

We were to be shown to the golden world
of flowers which that nation seemed, -

But in so being let us not forget that
we have there among us equally some who
were who found with their hands some
small birds who were with them
who were found with them in some of the
who found shelter in shelter with them
in case of battle, - when the whole of the
ground from the mountain down - and the
whole of the valley - there were left by the
wells - which - the whole of the valley -

great silent army - ~~array of soldiers dead~~ - ~~which~~ ^{which} shall never again
be awakened by bugle blast, - & which has fought
its last battle, - The cry of the thousands
who mourn for them - is loud in that
sunny clime, - There are loving hearts to
sing their praises, - and loving hands to
strew their graves with rare & costly blossoms, -

They were the men who once stood face
to face with those who sleep beneath our
feet - in array of battle, - and with whom
they crossed weapons in a deadly strife
for the mastery, - So long a time has
elapsed since that strife was ended that our
passions have begun to cool, - and our sympathies
to glow, warm into life - -

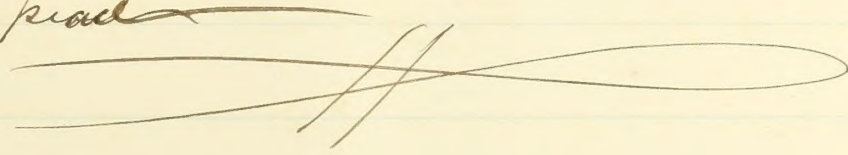
It is true that ^{the} south introduced the
conflict, - But it is evident that the men
who wielded southern bayonets - believed as
firmly in the righteousness of their cause as
we in ours, - To the same God asunder

prayers for the success of loyal - and rebellious
 arms. - These Veterans will tell you that the
 "gray jackets" fought with terrible earnestness, -
 bravely & well. - As they only could have done at
 the bidding of conscience, - - There may have
 been a terrible crime, - But let God say that, -
 Let us say - they made a fearful mistake, - not
 knowing what they did, - In any event they have
 suffered far worse than we, - - Our disbanded
 volunteers returned to homes of plenty, - But the
 shattered fragment of an army which surrendered at
 Appomattox - had no home waiting to receive it, -
 It found only heaps of ashes and desolated fields, -
 where once had been its homesteads, - - The North
 scarce felt the war save in the great loss of her
 noble men, - - The pinched & poverty stricken South
 is still smarting from its effects, - - Oh, friends
 we can afford to be generous & forgiving. -

Remember those un dying words ~~of~~ from his
 lips whose eulogy has been so fitly pronounced, -

"Malice toward none, & Charity for all" — 14

These brave heroes - whom we honor to-day
fought to preserve the Union, -- And the
union of hearts, ^{is a prerequisite of peace} no less than the union of
governments - ~~is a prerequisite of~~ ^{cemented} - They preserved
the latter with their best hearts' blood - but
the former they left in our keeping, -- The South
may still cherish her old sentiment - & need to be
ruled with iron hand, -- Let Statesmen decide
that, -- But meanwhile let us, the common
people - strive only to reunite the severed ties
of brotherhood & love, -- When we shall have
done this - the work which our soldiers began
will be completed, -- And the Republic shall
brand forward upon a new corner of
greatness - in the midst of "permanent &
bleased peace"



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